

Parental Involvement in Home-Based Education

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Abstract

Decades of research have shown that parental involvement in education can have a crucial influence on the development and achievement of students. This involvement can present itself both within and outside of school hours. The current literature review explores parental involvement in a home-based context, briefly looking at the ways in which involvement can be shown. The scope of Parental involvement is then covered, identifying trends which occur in achievement when parents are involved and support their child in their education. This review then looks at the barriers which hinder parental involvement and in turn identifies strategies that can be implemented to foster increased involvement. Barriers covered include: parental beliefs, the nature and quality of the parent-teacher partnership and the ethnic diversity of students and families within the school. In summary, this review emphasises how teachers can facilitate parental involvement as a means of increasing the achievement of their students.

Keywords: *Parental Involvement, Home-Based, Education, Achievement, Barriers, Academic, New Zealand, Students*



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Introduction

Parental involvement (PI) has long been considered a crucial force in the learning, development and success of children throughout their education and life ([Patrikakou, 2008](#); [Clinton & Hattie, 2013](#)). Decades of research across many countries and by different researchers in the field of family involvement have supported the premise that children with involved parents are more likely to develop into knowledgeable, healthy, responsible, confident and caring adults ([Avvisati, Besbas & Guyon, 2010](#); [Patrikakou, 2008](#)). The effectiveness of PI in terms of the progress and achievement of learners is undisputed, however the development and implementation of PI throughout schools presents many barriers. These barriers are manifesting themselves as gaps between rhetoric, theory and reality, or what is actually happening ([Hornby & Lafaele, 2011](#)).

This review provides a brief outline of home-based PI, its scope and how PI can be used to improve academic achievement. Barriers will then be discussed, including factors that can possibly inhibit or alternatively facilitate PI in the education of children. This review will particularly focus on the critique of literature that encompasses PI that occurs outside of schooling hours (home-based PI).

Parental Involvement: What is it?

PI can occur within a school context during school hours, or it may be home-based and therefore occur outside of school contact hours. There are a number of definitions regarding PI in the home, but for the purpose of this review PI will be defined as the expectations, actions or activities that parents actively take outside of school hours which support their child's development and academic achievement ([Barge & Loges, 2003](#); [Clinton & Hattie, 2013](#); [Patrikakou, 2008](#)). However, even within this definition, what constitutes PI may be interpreted differently

depending on the perspective being explored: according to [Barge & Loges \(2003\)](#) parents, schools and students will all differ in their interpretation of what PI looks like in education.

Studies that explored the relationship between PI and educational achievement tend to report from the perspective of either the parents or the teacher; however [Clinton & Hattie \(2013\)](#) focused on collecting students' opinions on PI and how it impacted on their academic achievement. A key finding within this study was that students who perceived their parents as setting high expectations and engaging in school talk were more likely to have higher academic achievement and self-efficacy in reading ([Clinton & Hattie, 2013](#)). From these findings, they concluded that schools and parents need to collaborate to create mutual understanding and cohesion between the school and the home environment.

Similarly, [Bull, Brooking & Campbell's \(2008\)](#) research drew upon seven New Zealand case studies of initiatives that supported home-school partnerships, with their findings aligning with [Clinton & Hattie \(2013\)](#). [Bull et al. \(2008\)](#) suggested that parents need to share, understand and form a partnership with schools in order to develop a "shared language of learning" (p.6). This shared language for learning enables academic communication between a student and parent in the home. [Clinton & Hattie \(2013\)](#) found the school-parent partnership to be particularly important in low socio-economic families, where it is less likely that there be a shared language of learning. This is because in these families the parents may not have the knowledge or understanding of schooling terminology. The findings from [Clinton & Hattie \(2013\)](#) and [Bull et al. \(2008\)](#) suggest that schools, especially those in low socio-economic areas, could improve student achievement through engaging and teaching parents the *language of learning* so that they can support their child from home.

Scope of PI

When PI is utilised in education, it can have a positive impact on student achievement. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler's (1995) theoretical review determined that learner success is not dependent on PI, but that in most circumstances PI is a powerful enabler and enhancer of educational success. The absence of PI was found to eliminate opportunities for students to augment their learning whereas its presence created opportunities. In utilising PI it is important to understand the scope of influence that PI can have on achievement. [Jeynes \(2005\)](#) completed a meta-analysis of 41 studies that examined the relationship of PI with urban elementary school academic achievement. A key finding in this research was a significant relationship between PI and academic achievement. Within this study a pattern emerged where parental expectations and the style of parenting (the extent to which a parenting approach is helpful and supportive), were found to be two aspects of PI that have a particularly strong relationship with positive academic outcomes for students. [Jeynes \(2005\)](#) found that the effect size for parental expectation ($d=0.58$) was a far more potent predictor of achievement than school-based PI (effect size, $d=0.21$). This finding extended across both dominant and minority ethnic groups in the study. The findings within Jeynes' meta-analysis align with those of Henderson & Mapps' (2002) which concluded that as a whole, the relationship between PI and improved academic achievement is consistent across all economic, ethnic and educational backgrounds.

Bandura's social learning theory predicts that students will emulate the behaviour of their parents; when parents devote time and show interest in activities that are related to school, they are providing an opportunity for children to augment their learning (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). This notion is supported through [Avvisati et al. \(2010\)](#) in their literature review, which found that parents who showed an interest and gave attention to their child's learning, or praised and rewarded behaviours that were associated with school success, increased the effort exerted by their child and in turn the child experienced greater academic achievement. These children were also more likely to have stronger self-efficacy than those who had parents who were not involved ([Avvisati et al., 2010](#)).

Overcoming barriers to PI

Parental Beliefs

There is an abundance of research into the barriers to PI ([Bull et al., 2008](#); [Graham-Clay, 2005](#); [Trinick, 2015](#)). These barriers are addressed in [Hornby & Lafaele's \(2011\)](#) review which highlights the discrepancy between PI theory and reality; although the benefits of PI are well known, it can be difficult to support and implement PI in education. A critical step in the development of successful PI is recognising that parents' beliefs will have a significant impact on their involvement in the education of their children.

In Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler's (1995) review, results indicated that a parent's perceived ability to help will impact on their involvement; parents with low self-efficacy and belief in their abilities were found to avoid contact with school related topics as they were concerned that their involvement would not result in positive learning outcomes for their child. This is despite the fact that studies have shown that supporting a child's learning

does not require a high academic level from parents. [Clinton & Hattie \(2013\)](#) found that the key to linking PI with increased academic achievement was for parents to be explicit in expressing their high expectations and aspirations for their child's learning.

Parent – Teacher Partnership

Another factor found to influence PI was the quality of the parent to teacher partnership and whether schools set the expectation that parents be involved ([Epstein & Salinas, 2004](#); [Trinick, 2015](#)). [Bull et al., \(2008\)](#) identified a trend within the case studies and literature that they reviewed; in schools where strong partnerships were fundamental to operations rather than an 'add on' there were higher levels of PI and consistency between the home and school setting. This trend aligns with that identified by [Trinick \(2015\)](#): Trinick used a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the success of the Mutukaroa project, an initiative aimed at increasing PI in New Zealand Schools. This initiative sought to form partnerships between parents and school through supporting teaching and collaborating with parents of students to increase their involvement in home education. [Trinick's \(2015\)](#) evaluation found parents who were treated as full partners and included in the decision making and goal setting in their child's education, had a greater understanding of the actions they could take to support and engage with their child.

[Epstein & Salinas \(2004\)](#) draw upon a range of research articles and case studies to suggest strategies teachers could use to increase PI in their students' education. An emphasis was put on the importance of teachers fostering PI through designing tasks that encourage collaboration, such as setting homework that facilitates students having to discuss and share information with their parents. When parents feel their academic input is valued by teachers, they are more likely to engage with their child's education at home ([Epstein & Salinas, 2004](#)).

A number of research projects ([Bull et al., 2008](#); [Graham-Clay, 2005](#); [Hornby & Lafaele, 2011](#)) found successful partnerships work best when the actions taken by teachers are embedded in the whole-school development plans. A number of common strategies identified to increase PI were identified, such as: keeping parents up-to-date with student progress, collaborate in goal setting (teacher, parent and student collaborating), encourage high expectations and use culturally inclusive practice. [Epstein & Salinas \(2004\)](#) analysed a number of case studies where parent workshops were run to equip parents with content knowledge and skills to support their child's education. These workshops were found to strengthen school-home relationships, provide parents with content knowledge as well as a platform for parents to share their cultures and expertise. It was found that as a result of these workshops, many of the school student pass rates exceeded expectations ([Epstein & Salinas, 2004](#)). This research indicates that there are many measures that can be taken to increase PI however these require commitment, interest and active engagement from all parties involved (parents, teachers and students).

Ethnic Diversity

The increasing ethnic diversity throughout schools in New Zealand will have an impact on the involvement of parents in student education. [Hornby & Witte's \(2010\)](#) survey of 21 primary schools in New Zealand found that many ethnically

diverse parents were not aware of the importance of being involved with their child's schooling, nor how to engage with the school. This was because many of these diverse parents had English as a second language or came from backgrounds where PI was not considered important; as a result they were less likely to be actively involved in supporting their child's education from home (Hornby & Witte, 2010). A challenge for teachers is to build relationships with, and gain input from, these parents about their beliefs around the child's educational aspirations. A number of studies found Pasifika parents do not know what questions to ask and are not confident in voicing their opinions or challenging the New Zealand education system (Trinick, 2015). This is in contrast to the longitudinal study analysed by Fan (2001) that looked into the effects of PI in secondary schools. Fan (2001) found that there were comparable degrees of PI between different ethnic groups, indicating that ethnicity is not a factor when it comes to the degree of PI in a student's education. This discrepancy may be due to the illusive nature of PI in that it is hard to create a definitive answer as to what factors equate to PI. Hornby & Witte (2010); Trinick (2015) and Fan (2001) all still recognise the importance of PI in raising academic achievement and stress that teachers need to use innovative, context relevant measures to increase PI. Jeynes (2005) found PI to share a strong association with academic achievement across all ethnic groups and that increasing PI may be one means of bridging the achievement gap between white European students and ethnic minority groups.

Implications for Future Teaching

Home-based PI can have a huge influence on a child's development. The scope of PI enables it to both facilitate and enhance student learning, resulting in improved academic achievement across student groups and different ethnicities. Throughout the literature reviewed, PI has been recognised as a complex affair, with a multitude of barriers that can manifest themselves as gaps between the rhetoric and reality (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). These include parents' beliefs and perceptions of how they can be involved, the partnership between school and parents and ethnic diversity. As teachers, it is important that these barriers be identified and measures taken to reduce their effects, so that PI can be utilised as a strategy in raising academic achievement. Research has stressed the importance of all parties involved in PI (parents, teachers, students & schools), having a clear understanding of what is expected from them so that a cohesive language of learning can be created and used in both the school and home context (Bull et al., 2008).

The barriers to PI are dependent on context and learning about the beliefs and cultures of parents and how these may influence PI in the home may be one of the first steps in gaining any understanding of that context. This may be achieved through forming a partnership with families, collaborating to set goals and coming to a shared understanding of what is expected of the child and what can be done to support and help the student. When these measures are successfully integrated into schools, they can bridge the achievement gap between students; in particular between European and ethnic minority students throughout New Zealand (Jeynes, 2005; Trinick, 2015). The successful integration and utilisation of home-based PI by teachers and education institutes

is essential in the development of successful, competent, lifelong learners.

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